**A Bit About Elements of a Short Story**

**(Novels too!)**

**Setting**: Where the story takes place. This includes the time and place in which the story happens.

**Characters**: The “people” who inhabit the story. The author gives clues about characters by describing the: way they act, speak, think, how other characters react to them and the way they look [direct description]. The *protagonist* main character in the story and the *antagonist* is the character that presents opposition to the main character.

**Conflict**: Conflict is essential to the plot. Without conflict there is no plot. It is the opposition of forces which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. There are two main types of conflict in stories: ***external*** and ***internal***.

*External Conflict***:** A struggle between a character and an outside force is an external conflict. Characters may face several types of outside forces. The outside force may be another character. It may be the character and the community. The outside force may also be forces of nature. For example, a story might be the main character struggling against the arctic cold.

* character versus character
* character versus nature
* character versus society

*Internal Conflict:* A struggle that takes place in a character's mind is called internal conflict. For example, a character may have to decide between right and wrong or between two solutions to a problem. Sometimes, a character must deal with his or her own mixed feelings or emotions.

* character versus self

*Some conflict*might be internal or external. For example, “character versus fate or destiny” might take place as an internal and/or external battle. Character versus fate or destiny is when a character attempts to break free of a predetermined path chosen before him prior to his knowledge. It can also be referred to as an issue between fate and freewill. A common example is Shakespeare’s Macbeth.

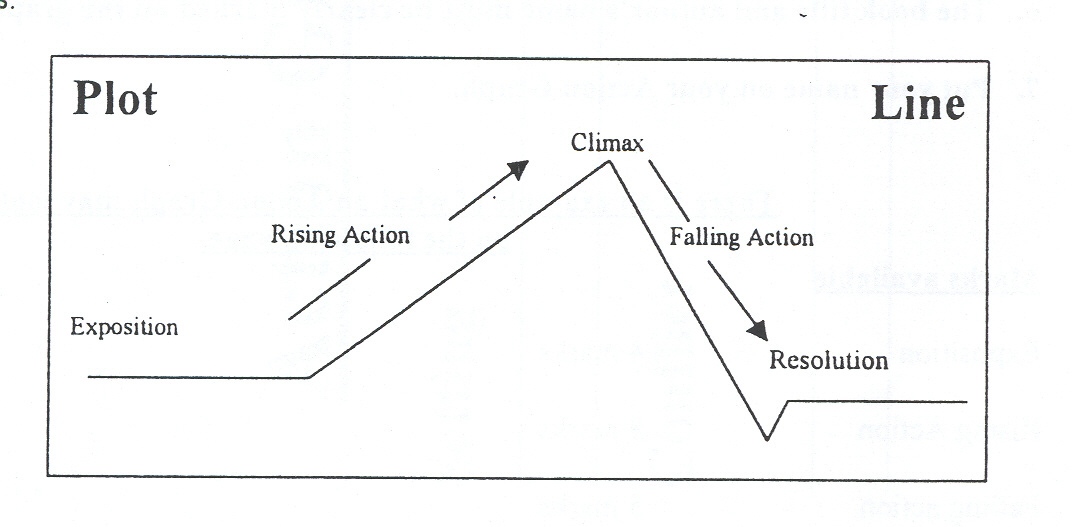
*Reading for Conflict.* As you read a story:

1. identify the main characters
2. decide what conflict they face
3. look for steps they take to settle that conflict
4. see if the steps cause other conflict
5. watch for clues and try to predict what the characters will do
6. enjoy the buildup of suspense
7. put yourself in the story
8. decide if you would have solved the conflict in the same way

**Theme(s)**: A statement about life that the author wants to convey to the reader. The main idea that the author wants you to remember about the story. Some themes are easier to spot than others. Remember a theme is the controlling idea or central insight. Some examples of common themes include: Love is blind, believe in yourself, people are afraid of change, don’t judge a book by its cover, you can overcome adversity, the importance of friendship…family…honesty.

**Point of View**: Refers to the method of narrating a story: who is telling the story in the novel. This is important since everyone has a different point of view

* First Person Point of View
  + The narrator is one of the characters in the story.
  + First person pronouns, such as I, me, my, and mine are used in telling the story.
  + Since the narrator is a character in the story, he/she may not be completely reliable.
  + We find out only what this character knows, thinks, and witnesses.
* Third Person Objective
  + The narrator is not a character in the story.
  + Third person pronouns such as he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them are used in telling the story.
  + The narrator is an observer who can only tell what is said and done.
  + The narrator cannot see into the minds of any of the characters.
  + We find out only what the characters say and do.
* Third Person Limited
  + The narrator is not a character in the story.
  + Third person pronouns such as he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them are used in telling the story.
  + The narrator tells the story from the vantage point of one character.
  + The narrator can see into this character’s mind, but not any of the other characters.
  + We find out only what this character does, knows, thinks, and witnesses.
* Third Person Omniscient
  + The narrator is not a character in the story.
  + Third person pronouns such as he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them are used in telling the story.
  + The narrator is all-knowing, and can see into the minds of all of the characters. The narrator can also report what is said and done.
  + We find out what all of the characters do, feel, think, and witness.

**Plot**: A plot is a series of events that make up a story. Traditional plot structure or plot line is made up of five parts:

* **Exposition**
* **Rising action**
* **Climax**
* **Falling action**
* **Resolution**
* **Exposition** is at the very beginning of the story. The reader learns about the main character, the setting and the conflict.
* **Climax** The Rising Action builds up to a climax. The climax is the most important part of the story. In the climax the main character comes face-to-face with the major conflict/problem of the story. The climax of a story will usually have some effect on the main character. He/She will be changed in some way, even if they have not been able to overcome the conflict. (While the rising action comes before the climax…it is often helpful to identify the climax first).
* **Rising Action** is the main events in a story leading up to the climax. These main events may build suspense. They keep the reader interested, wondering what will happen next. An author does not want the story to be too predictable.
* **Falling Action** usually occurs after the main climax. The main character manages to get out of trouble. Falling Action may be the additional events that 'take the reader to the end of the story.
* **Resolution** is how the story finally ends. Any loose ends in the plot caused by the climax are taken care of in the resolution. The resolution is the conclusion of the story. It brings the story to a believable ending.